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DE RUEHVI #2816/01 3201424

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FM AMEMBASSY VIENNA

TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 9021

INFO RUEHZL/EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE

RUEHPS/USOFFICE PRISTINA 0711

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 VIENNA 002816

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/15/2022

TAGS: PREL EU AU

SUBJECT: NOVEMBER GAERC: AUSTRIAN PRE-BRIEF

REF: STATE 156474

Classified By: Econ/Pol Couns Dean Yap. Reason: 1.4(b) and (d)

¶1. (U) Per reftel, Econ/Pol Couns met Nov. 16 with Austrian MFA European Correspondent Andreas Riecken to discuss plans for the upcoming GAERC. Following are Riecken's comments:

Summits

¶2. (C) Riecken reported that there will be no discussion of the content of the China and India summits; rather, Ministers will be updated on preparations. Riecken did confirm that Iran's nuclear program will be on the China Summit agenda. GAERC discussion of the Africa Summit will focus on how to organize the event in such a way that a maximum of pressure is put on Mugabe. Riecken added that he expected a few other countries to follow the UK example and not send their head of government, but also confirmed that Austria would not be one of them.

Middle East and Southwest Asia

¶3. (C) Pakistan is on the agenda but as yet there has been no proposal for Council conclusions. Any public statement would be made by the Presidency in response to press questions. The Ministers will have discussion with HighRep Solana about possible post-Annapolis EU contributions to the Israeli-Palestinian peace process, but Riecken said Solana's draft thoughts on EU input are very general because of the lack of information on possible outcomes from Annapolis.

¶4. (C) The GAERC will issue conclusions on Iraq that will point to enhanced EU engagement in Iraq. Of particular interest to Austria, Riecken reported, are references to strengthening women's rights. Riecken noted that a possible visit by the Iraqi Foreign Minister to Brussels will also be discussed.

¶5. (C) Lebanon is not on the agenda, but the French have reportedly submitted a text for Council conclusions that, Riecken thought, would be supportive of elections according to constitutional procedures and agreement on a consensus candidate.

¶6. (C) Austria, Riecken said, continued to be among the more "reserved" EU members on the matter of autonomous sanctions. It favors UNSC action. He volunteered, however, that the overall trend in the EU was in favor of autonomous sanctions. If that became the clear view, Austria would not block an EU decision. At the GAERC, the issue will be discussed further, but he expected no conclusions at this Council.

Western Balkans

¶7. (C) Riecken reported that the EU has made little progress in developing a common position on Kosovo. While the recognition questions has been largely dealt with by agreeing to leave the decision up to member states, the deployment of an EU mission remains dogged by questions about the legality of its deployment. In addition, many member states believe there must be a clear gameplan for the process of independence in order to agree to an EU mission. Riecken acknowledged the problem of trying to craft a plan with the Kosovars an Serbs without having a clear idea of what the EU would do at the end of the process. He also said that Austria and others still see some utility in the troika process and do not want to undercut it by an essentially public discussion in EU councils.

¶8. (C) Riecken said the Council will issue conclusions backing HighRep Lacjak.

Georgia

¶9. C() Georgia was put on the agenda at Greece's request. The issue before the Council is how to deal with Russian issuance of passports to Abkahzians.

Chad

¶10. (C) Foreign and Defense Ministers will discuss the Chad mission together. He foresaw no major problems with the deployment.

Burma

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¶11. (C) Burma is not on the agenda, but Council conclusions have been prepared for formal endorsement and issuance.
McCaw